

R.L. STINE

# Goosebumps

PRESENTS

TV BOOK #16

ATTACK OF THE JACK-O'-LANTERNS



WITH EIGHT PAGES  
OF COLOR PHOTOS  
FROM THE SHOW!

BASED  
ON THE  
HOT TV  
SERIES

SCHOLASTIC



PARACHUTE



A PARACHUTE PRESS BOOK

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Adapted by Carol Ellis, from the screenplay by Billy Brown & Dan Angel.  
Based on the novel by R.L. Stine.

ISBN 0-590-37511-3

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Printed in the U.S.A.

First Scholastic printing, October 1997



"I can't wait until tomorrow!" I told my friend Walker. "It's going to be the best Halloween ever!"

My name is Drew Brockman. And I love Halloween! It's my favorite day of the whole year.

"It's going to be so spooky," I added. I glanced around the neighborhood as we walked home from school. Every house had cutouts of bats and skeletons and witches in the windows. Ghosts made of sheets swung from the trees. Jack-o'-lanterns with evil grins sat on the porches.

It was starting to get dark. Bare tree branches rattled in the wind.



"Aren't you excited, Walker?" I asked. I pulled my dark hair back into a ponytail and grinned at him.

Walker shrugged. "I guess," he replied. "Halloween's okay."

"Okay?" I stared at him in surprise. Actually, I stared *up* at him. I'm short, and he's tall — at least a foot taller than I am. "Are you kidding? We get to dress up in costumes and pretend to be monsters or ghosts. *And* we get tons of candy. It's the best night of the year!"

Walker shrugged again. "I don't know, Drew. I kind of like the last day of school the best."

"But Halloween is the one time you get to be somebody else," I told him. "What are you going as?"

"I don't know," Walker muttered. Then he sighed. "Look, Drew, I'm not sure my parents will let me go trick-or-treating tomorrow."

"What?" I cried. "Why not?"

"They're worried," he explained. "You know those four people who disappeared?"

I nodded. Talk about creepy! A few days before, four people in the next town had vanished. Totally vanished. And nobody knew what happened to them.

"It's really weird," I said. "But what does that have to do with Halloween?"

Walker looked down at his feet. "I guess my mom is worried that *I'll* disappear next," he said. "She says it's dangerous to go out tomorrow night."

"Walker, the disappearances were miles from here!" I argued. "And those four people were all grownups — not kids out trick-or-treating!"

Walker didn't answer me.

"Besides, no one even knows if anything bad happened to those people," I said.

I began walking faster.

This was awful! If Walker didn't go trick-or-treating with me, it would ruin everything. Halloween is no fun if you have to go by yourself.

"Hey!" Walker hurried to catch up with me. "We could go to the school carnival in-



stead," he suggested. "They have games and everything. That would be fun."

"I can't believe you're doing this!" I told him.

"Well, aren't you nervous about going out?" he asked.

"No," I declared.

"Not even a little?"

"No," I repeated. Actually, I *was* a little nervous. But I couldn't let it ruin the best night of the year. "Look, you know how much I love Halloween," I told him. "Besides, who would want to make *us* disappear?"

Walker thought about that for a second. Then he smiled. "Oh, okay. So, what are you going to be?" he asked.

"A superhero," I replied.

"Like Wonder Woman?" Walker asked.

I shook my head. "I'm going to be Super Drew! I already have the cape and a mask and everything."

As I told Walker about my costume, we turned the corner and started down my

block. On one side were houses. On the other side was a thick forest.

The sun was completely gone now. The woods were dark. The bare tree branches looked like bony arms and fingers. Like skeletons, I thought.

As the branches shook and creaked in the wind, a shiver ran up my spine. The dark, thick forest always gave me the creeps. It was full of shadows and weird sounds. I walked faster.

The creaking noises grew louder. I glanced toward the woods again — and gasped.

A huge, dark shape crouched behind one of the trees.

Watching.

Waiting.

Ready to pounce.



## 2

Run! I thought. Grab Walker and run!

But before I could move, a strong gust of wind blew up.

The huge, dark shape shifted in the breeze. It was just another tree.

Whoa, I thought. I really let myself get spooked that time!

"Drew?" Walker asked. "Is something wrong?"

I turned to look at him. "Um, no," I said quickly.

"Well, what do you think I should wear for Halloween?" he asked.

"Why don't you go as a Ninja?" I suggested.

He shook his head. "I'd look stupid."  
"Well, how about . . ." Suddenly I froze. I heard a noise behind us. It sounded like footsteps.

Was something hiding in the woods after all? Or someone?

"What was that sound?" I whispered to Walker. "Were those footsteps?"

Walker's eyes grew wide. "I don't know," he whispered back. We both took a deep breath. Then we slowly turned around.

No one was behind us. The sidewalk was empty. I squinted, but all I saw were shadows.

"Hello?" I called out in a shaky voice. "Who's there?"

Silence.

I glanced at Walker. "I'm hearing things," I murmured. "There's nobody out here but us."

We turned back around — and screamed.

Two figures stood on the sidewalk in front of us.

"Aaahh!" I screamed again.



Walker grabbed my arm. "Drew!" he cried.  
"Run!"

The two figures burst out laughing.

Wait a second! I thought. I know those voices! I squinted at the two people. It was hard to see them in the dark, so I moved closer. A blond-haired boy and a girl with short brown hair smiled at me.

"Shane and Shana!" I cried.

I couldn't believe it. Shane and Shana are twins, and they used to live next door to me. I hadn't seen them since they moved away two years ago.

Shane threw back his head and laughed.  
"You look like you saw a ghost, Drew!"

"Did you think we were going to attack you?" Shana asked with a giggle.

"What are you guys doing here?" I asked.

"Mom and Dad came to visit some friends, and they brought us," Shana replied. "We thought it would be cool to see the old neighborhood."

Shane nodded. "We're only going to be here for a few days."

"Too bad you can't stay longer," I told them. "This is Walker, by the way. His family moved to town just after you left."

Walker still looked a little pale, but he smiled at the twins. "Hi."

"Shane and Shana used to be my best friends," I explained to him.  
"We weren't even sure you lived here anymore," Shana told me.

"But there you were," Shane added.  
"Walking down the street."

"This is so cool!" I declared. "You guys have to come trick-or-treating with us tomorrow."

"Perfect!" Shana exclaimed.

"I'm going as —" I suddenly stopped talking.

I heard a sound coming from the forest. Not a creaking tree branch. Not footsteps.

A low rumbling sound.



Was it a growl? I wasn't sure. But I knew I hadn't imagined it this time.

"Did you hear that?" I whispered.

"What?" Walker asked. "What is it?"

"Shhh!" I held up my hand.

We all froze, listening.

"I don't hear anything," Walker murmured.

"I don't, either," Shane added.

I kept listening, but I didn't hear the sound again. "I guess it was just the wind," I whispered.

But, suddenly, a loud, vicious snarl ripped through the night.

A creature leaped from the shadows and landed on the sidewalk. A hideous creature with black fur; long, dripping fangs; and sharp claws.

"Aaaahhh!" We all screamed and turned to run.

But a second beast jumped out of the woods in front of us. It raised its claws and roared.

We were stuck between the two beasts.  
Trapped!  
The horrible creatures glared at us with hungry red eyes.  
Then they attacked.



The drooling monsters snarled. They slashed their horrible claws through the air.

I jumped away from them.

The creatures stepped closer. Then they pulled off their beastly heads — and began to laugh.

Tabitha and Lee. The biggest bullies in the neighborhood. They stood there dressed in bear costumes, holding masks in their hands. Laughing at me.

Masks! I thought in disgust. They fooled me with ugly masks and hairy costumes.

Tabitha and Lee are my age, and they're total creeps. They love to pick on me. They make fun of me because I'm short. And they

play nasty tricks. Once they slipped a mud sandwich into my lunch bag. Another time they put a fake spider in my desk. They practically fell over laughing when I screamed.

And now they had fooled me again. Tabitha pointed at me. "She falls for it every time!"

"You are the world's biggest sucker, Drew." Lee laughed.

"And Walker is the second biggest," Tabitha added with a nasty snicker.

I clenched my hands into fists. Why couldn't they just leave me alone? Why did they have to embarrass me in front of Shane and Shana?

"I'm getting sick of you two!" I yelled.

"Ooh, I'm scared!" Tabitha cried. "Lee, save me!"

Lee pretended to be frightened, too. "Not me," he answered. "I'm scared of creeps like them!"

Shana rolled her eyes. "Still the same old Tabitha and Lee," she said.

Tabitha stopped laughing. She peered at



the twins. "Well, if it isn't Shane and Shana," she said. She wrinkled her nose as if they smelled bad. "What are *you* doing back here?"

Shana shrugged. "We didn't come to see you, that's for sure."

"My heart is breaking!" Tabitha cried sarcastically.

"Yeah, so is mine," Lee added.

Tabitha waved her hairy mask in my face. "See you later, suckers!" she cried. Still laughing, she and Lee ran down the sidewalk.

I gritted my teeth. I felt too angry to speak, so I kicked at a bush.

"Are those two still torturing you, Drew?" Shane asked.

I nodded. "It's getting worse. Last year they sneaked into my Halloween party and pretended they were burglars."

"It was a really sick joke," Walker put in.

"Yeah," I agreed. "We thought it was for real."

"They used to bug *us*, too," Shane said. He

glanced at Shana. Then he grinned at me. "Would you like to get back at them?"

"Do dogs have fleas?" I asked.

Walker shook his head. "My dog doesn't." "It's just an expression, Walker," I explained. "It means I would absolutely *love* to get back at them. Tabitha and Lee have been making me miserable for years! Just once, I'd like to do it to them."

"Well, I know the perfect way to get back at them," Shana told me. "All you have to do is invite them to go trick-or-treating with you. Shane and I will do the rest."

"What's the idea?" I asked.

Shana glanced at her brother, then back at me. "You'll see," she told me with a mysterious smile.

What are they up to? I wondered. What's the big secret?

But then I felt a shiver of excitement. Who cares what the mystery plan is? I thought. If it will help me get back at Tabitha and Lee, I'll do it.

I'll do *anything*!



# 4

"You want *us* to go with *you*?" Tabitha asked. Even over the phone, I could tell she was shocked. "Let me get this straight, Drew. You want me and Lee to go trick-or-treating with you and Walker?"

I grinned at Walker, who sat on the chair in my bedroom. He had come home with me to put the twins' plan into action.

"Well, you guys are so good at pulling tricks on people," I told Tabitha. I tried to sound sweet and honest. "I thought you could teach us something."

"That's for sure," Tabitha agreed.

Ha! I thought. She believed me!

"Hang on a second," Tabitha said.

I could hear her whispering to somebody. Probably Lee, I thought. I crossed my fingers that he wouldn't talk her out of it.

After a few seconds, Tabitha came back on the line. "Okay, Drew," she said. "We'll go with you guys. Lee and I will be wearing space warrior costumes."

"Cool," I told her. "We'll meet you at seven o'clock tomorrow night on Willow Street."

"Right. See you then," Tabitha agreed. I hung up the phone and turned to Walker. "It's all set." I laughed. "Tabitha really thinks we want them to teach us some tricks."

"This time the trick will be on them," Walker said happily.

I nodded. "And they don't suspect a thing!"

At least, I hoped they didn't.

"It's too bad your friends Shane and Shana never showed up," Tabitha told me.

I nodded. "I hope they're okay."

I glanced around. Tabitha, Lee, Walker, and I stood on the corner of Willow Street.



We had already been trick-or-treating for an hour.

I wore my "Super Drew" costume — a long purple cape, yellow leotard, skirt, tights, and a red mask. Walker was dressed as a ghost. He wore a white sheet over his head. Pretty lame.

Tabitha and Lee were dressed as space warriors. They had wrapped silver material around their bodies. Their costumes looked great.

Wind whistled through the trees. Dark clouds blew across the full moon. The neighborhood was full of shadows and rustling noises. It was the perfect night to play a trick on Lee and Tabitha.

But where are the twins? I wondered. They never told me exactly what they were going to do. But I had expected them to show up by now. Where were they? Did something happen to them? Did they disappear like those four people in the next town?

"Come on. Let's go to one more house," Lee suggested. "That one." He pointed to a house at the end of the block.

The house looked old and run-down with sagging gutters, and tall weeds growing up the walls. And it was dark, except for one dim light in an upstairs window. As we walked closer, I saw the shadow of an old man in a rocking chair, swaying slowly back and forth.

The four of us hurried up the walk and climbed the front steps. Pumpkins carved with scary faces lined the sagging porch. "This place creeps me out," I whispered. "Let's get out of here."

"What's wrong? Are you chicken?" Tabitha teased me. She rang the doorbell.

It opened with a loud creak. An old woman poked her head out. She had tiny eyes and long, sharp fingernails.

She stared at us for a second. Then a strange smile spread across her face. "Oh, my goodness!" she cried. "What wonderful



costumes. Please come in. My husband is sick and can't get up. But it would make him very happy to see your costumes."

She pulled the door open wide. Tabitha, Lee, and Walker stepped right in. I hung back a second. It was dark in there, and I didn't want to go. But if I didn't, Tabitha and Lee would call me a chicken. I took a deep breath and followed them.

The woman slammed the door behind us. "My husband will be so happy. He loves children." With another smile, she pointed toward the staircase. "Up the stairs and turn right," she ordered us.

The steps creaked as we climbed. Cobwebs hung from the banister. At the top of the staircase stood a partly open door. A sliver of light shone out onto the floor.

I stopped walking. My hands began to shake. I had a *really* bad feeling about that door. Something evil lay on the other side of it.

Don't go in that room! I told myself. Get out of this house — now!

But the old woman nudged me forward.  
The door swung farther open.  
I peered into the room.  
And froze in terror.



# 5

Kids in Halloween costumes filled the room. Little kids. Big kids. All dressed up as ghosts and vampires and skeletons.

The kids sat on the floor. They stood against the walls. And when they saw the open door, they tried to run toward it.

But they couldn't run.

They could hardly move.

Every one of them was trapped. They were prisoners! Chained to the walls and the floor by thick chains wrapped around their wrists.

"Please!" they moaned. They held out their arms and rattled their chains. "Let us go. Please!" they begged. "You can't keep us here. Let us go!"

If I go in, I'll get chained, too! I thought. Terrified, I turned to run. But a little old man with a red face and shaggy white hair blocked my way. "Going somewhere?" he asked in a raspy voice.

"Let me go!" I screamed.

"You can't leave," the old man insisted. "I love your costume. In fact, I love it so much that you'll have to stay here. Forever!"

"Let me go!" I screamed again. I tried to shove past him. But, suddenly, I heard someone calling my name.

I spun around and stared back into the room.

The twins stood against the back wall.

They couldn't get free.

Terror filled their eyes. "Drew!" they called. "Help us, Drew! Don't leave us here!"

The old man reached for me. He was going to trap me here, too! I had to get out of there.

But how could I leave Shane and Shana?

What was I going to do?



# 6

"Shane!" I screamed. "Shana!"

I have to save them! I thought. I have to get them out of here!

I screamed their names again.

And bolted straight up in my bed.

My heart raced as I stared around my bedroom. Beads of sweat rolled down my forehead. I'm okay, I thought. Shane and Shana are safe, too. It was only a dream.

But I could still see the old man and woman, reaching for me with their clawlike hands. The kids, chained to the floor in their Halloween costumes. And the twins, trapped there forever.

"But it was just a dream," I muttered to myself. "Just a really bad dream!"

"Hey, Super Drew. Aren't you going out?" Dad asked the next night.

"I'm waiting for Walker," I explained. "He's late." I adjusted the red mask of my Halloween costume. Kids had been ringing the doorbell all evening. I couldn't wait to get outside and trick-or-treat.

"Drew?" Mom came into the family room with a worried look on her face. "I don't think I want you going out tonight."

"What?" I cried.

Dad looked confused. "Why not?" he asked Mom.

"I was just watching the news," she told us with a frown. "They still haven't found those four people who disappeared two days ago. I'm worried."

I was kind of worried, too. But I didn't dare admit it. If I did, Mom would make me stay in.



"I *have* to go out!" I insisted. "It's Halloween. I've been looking forward to this all year." I turned to my father. "Dad!" I pleaded.

Dad smiled at me. "Honey, it's not like children are missing," he told Mom. "Those were four *adults*."

"That's right!" I agreed.

"Plus, it wasn't in this town," Dad went on. "It was the next town over."

"That's miles from here," I added quickly.

"We can't keep Drew in a cage," Dad said. "She knows how to be careful. Don't you, Drew?"

I nodded. "Of course I do. I'm not a baby."

"The kids will be fine," Dad told Mom.

She sighed. "Just make sure you stay together, Drew," she told me. "Stay with Walker. Is that clear?"

"Yes!"

The doorbell rang. Dad opened the front door.

Walker stood on the porch, dressed all in

black. Black pants. Black jacket. Black gloves and hat. He looked like a big shadow.

"Hi, Walker." Dad gave him a puzzled look.

"What are you supposed to be?"

Walker stepped inside. "I'm a Dark and Stormy Night," he announced.

Dad still looked confused. "I get the 'dark' part. But where's the 'stormy'?"

In a flash, Walker pulled a water pistol from his Halloween bag. He squirted Dad right in the face.

I burst out laughing. Even Mom cracked a smile.

Dad laughed and wiped the water from his chin. "Very clever," he told Walker.

This is the perfect time to leave, I thought. Before Mom has a chance to get worried again. "I'll see you guys later," I told my parents.

"Drew, stay together," Mom reminded me.

"Yes, Mom." I pushed Walker toward the door.

"Don't talk to strangers," she warned.



"I know," I called over my shoulder.  
"Call if you have any problems!" Mom  
cried.

Dad wrapped his arm around her. "Every-  
thing's going to be fine. Drew promises to be  
extra careful. Right, Drew?" he asked me.

"I do," I promised. "Please don't worry."  
"I'll try not to." Mom bit her lip and tried to  
smile. "You kids have a good time!"

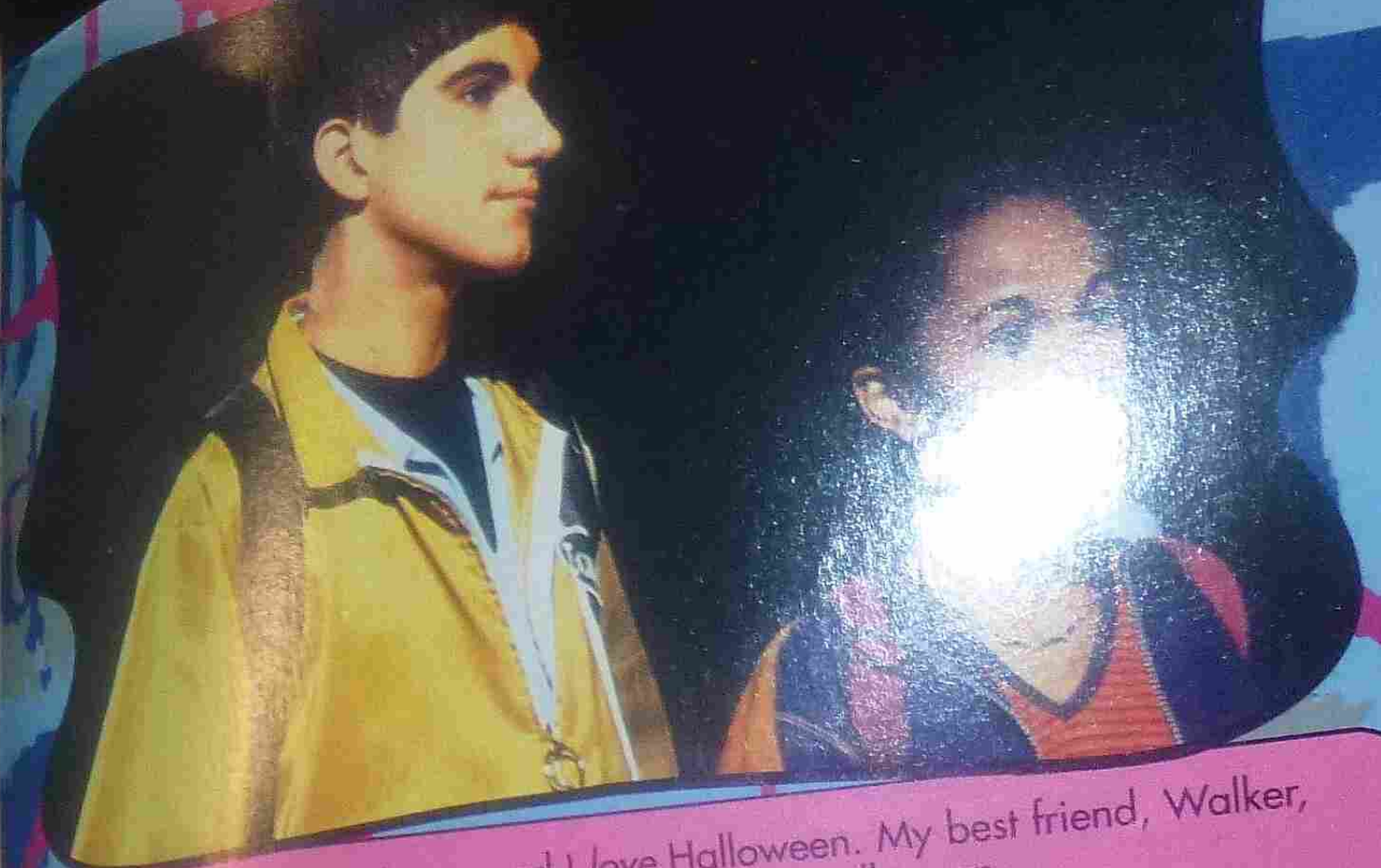
"We will!" I cried. "Bye!" I gave Walker  
another little push, and we headed out the  
door as fast as we could.

Outside, trick-or-treaters crowded the side-  
walks. Walker and I hurried down the street  
to meet Tabitha and Lee. I couldn't wait to  
see what trick Shane and Shana were going  
to play on them.

Across the road from Willow Street, I  
stopped. Tabitha and Lee stood on the cor-  
ner. Their space warrior costumes were  
made of shiny silver fabric.

"There they are," I told Walker.

Walker glanced at them. Then he glanced  
up and down the street. "But where are your

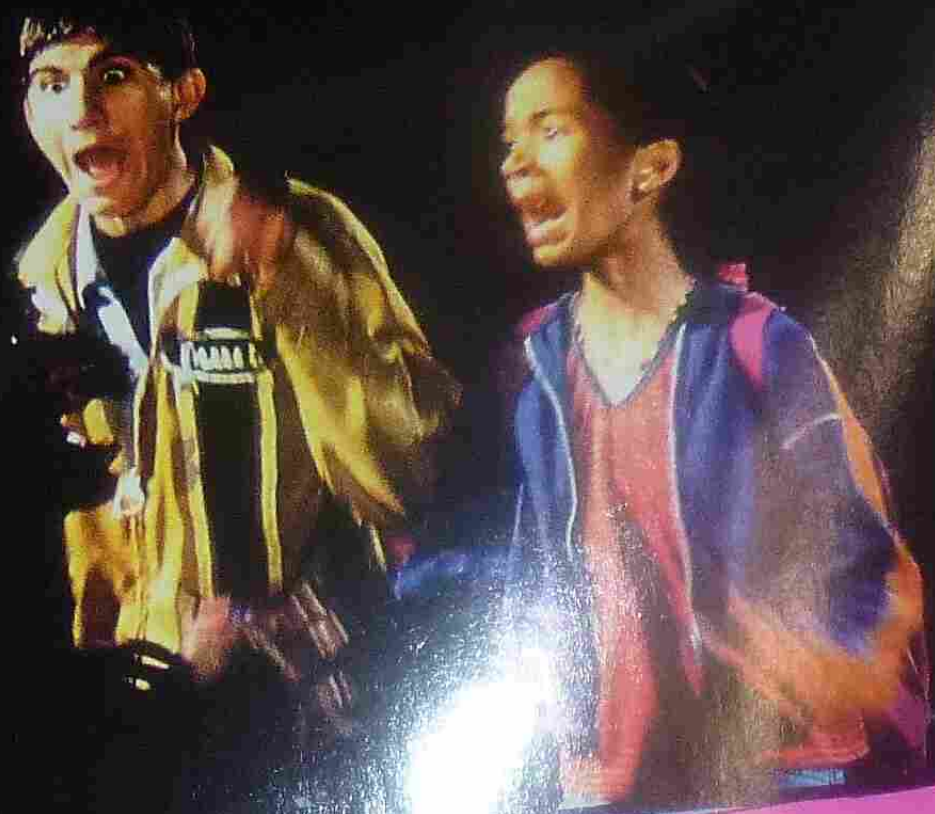


My name is Drew Brockman, and I love Halloween. My best friend, Walker, likes it, too. It was the day before Halloween...

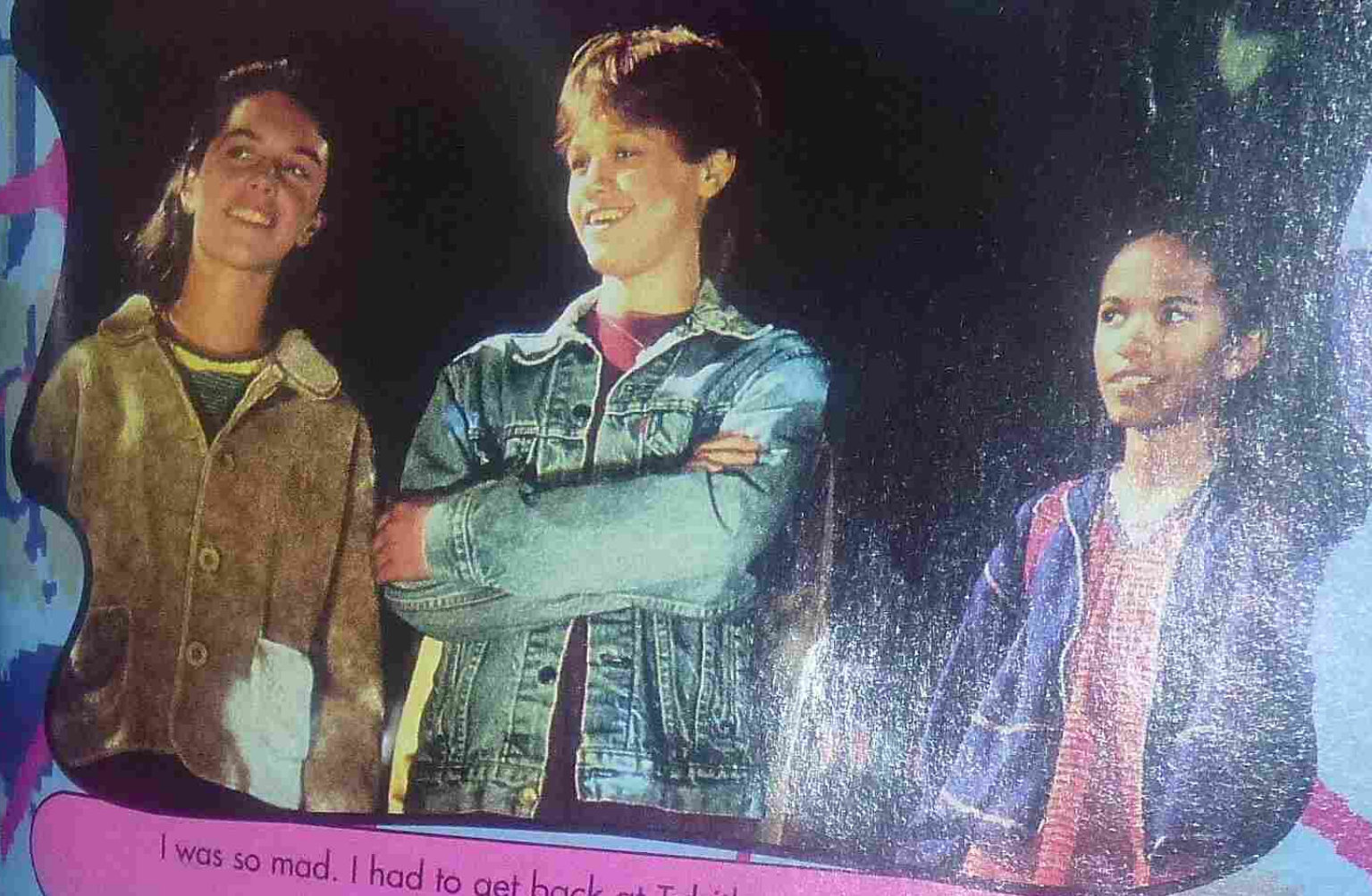


...and we bumped into my old friends Shane and Shana.

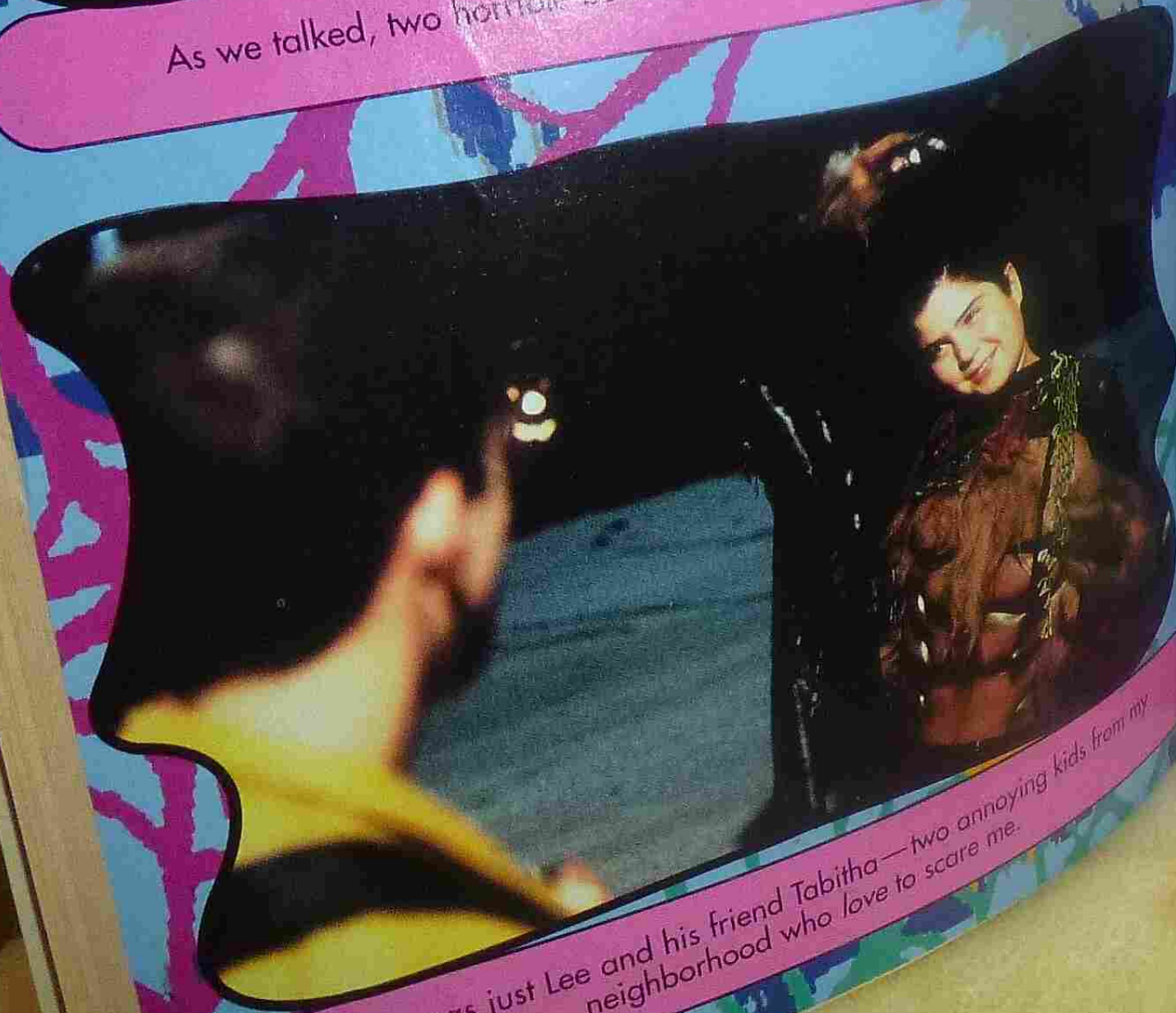




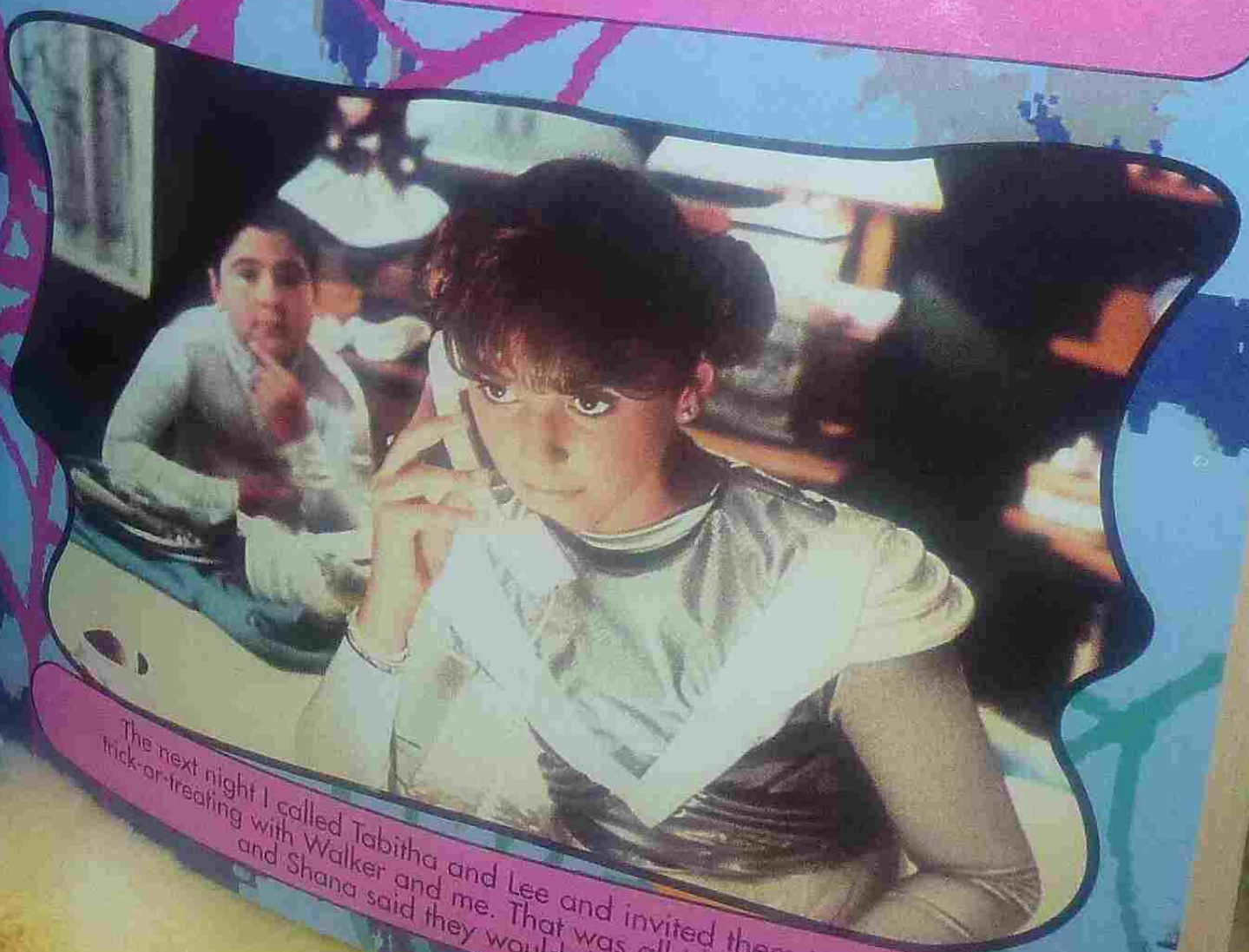
As we talked, two horrible beasts leaped out of the bushes at us!



I was so mad. I had to get back at Tabitha and Lee. Shane and Shana said they'd help me.



But it was just Lee and his friend Tabitha—two annoying kids from my neighborhood who love to scare me.

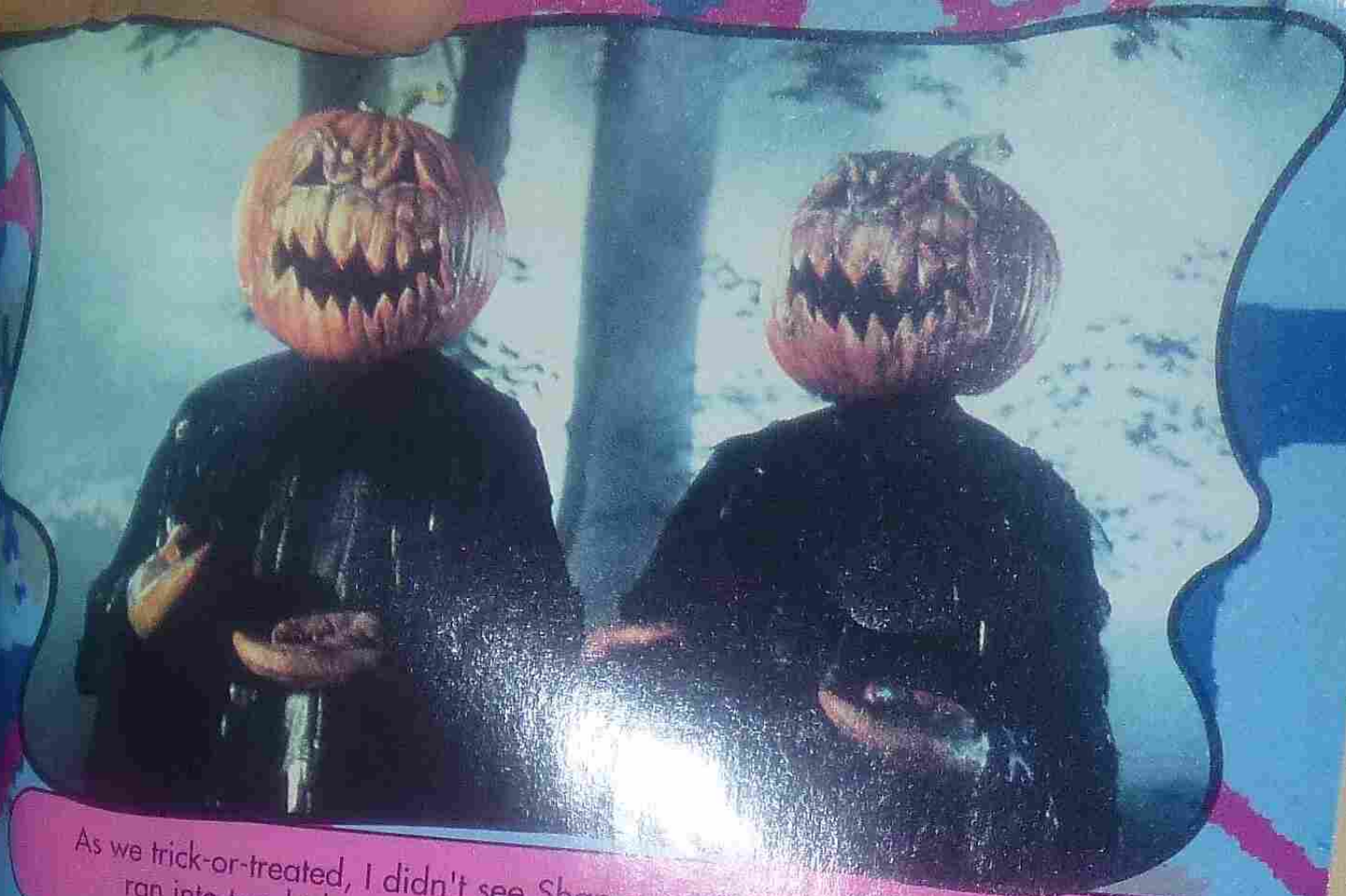


The next night I called Tabitha and Lee and invited them to come trick-or-treating with Walker and me. That was all I had to do. Shane and Shana said they would do the rest!

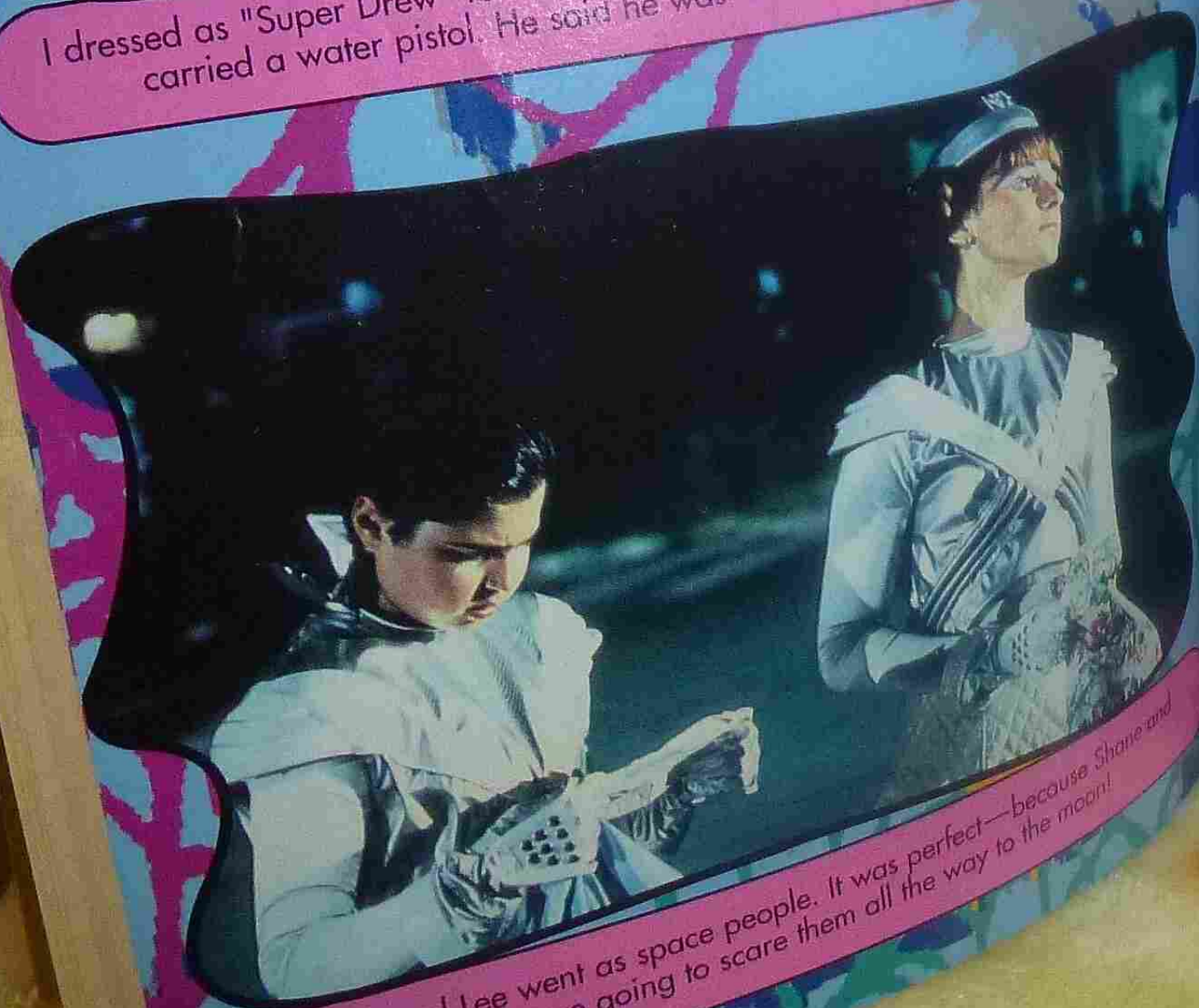




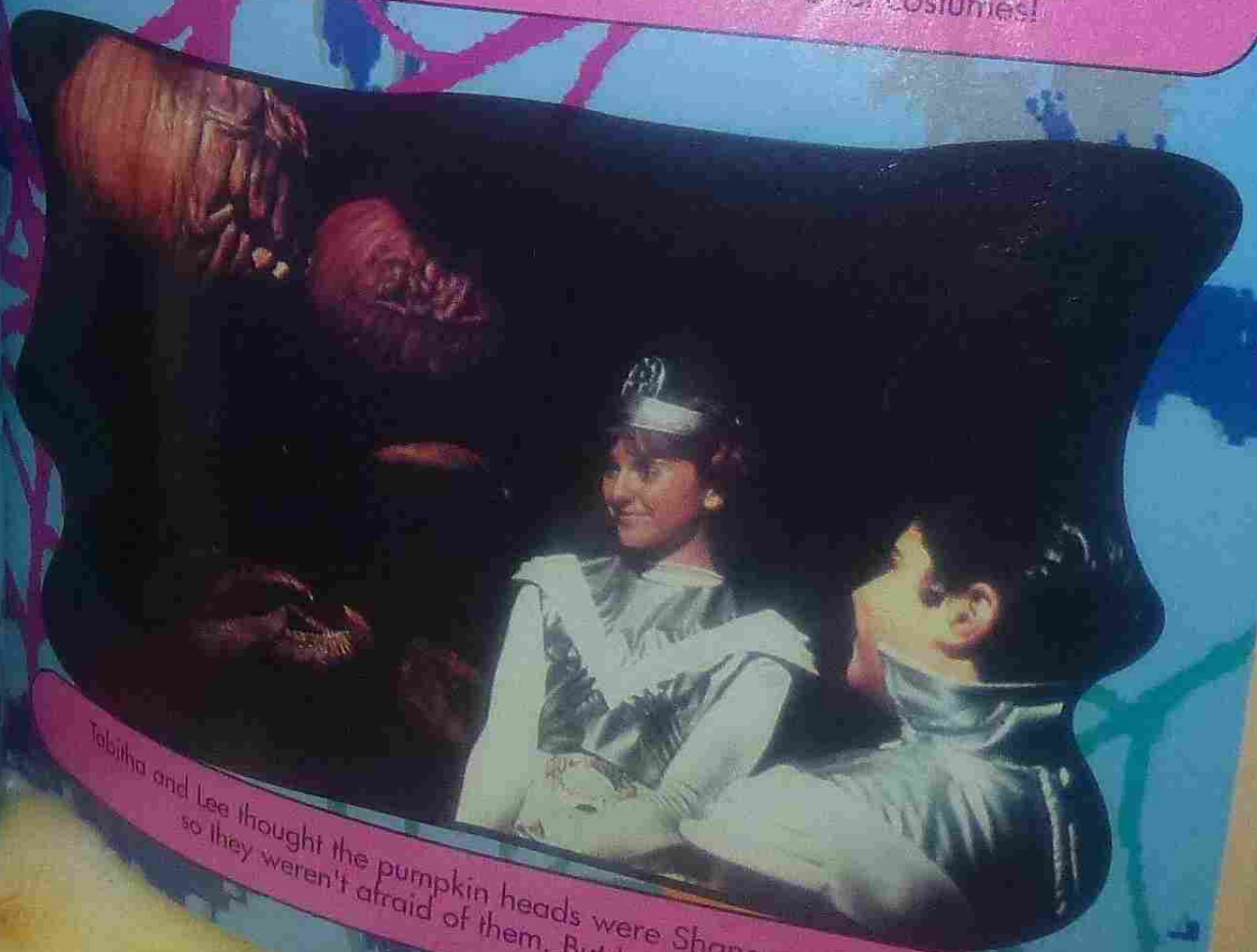
I dressed as "Super Drew" for Halloween. Walker dressed all in black—and he carried a water pistol. He said he was "A Dark and Stormy Night."



As we trick-or-treated, I didn't see Shane and Shana anywhere. But we ran into two hideous pumpkin-head creatures. Cool costumes!

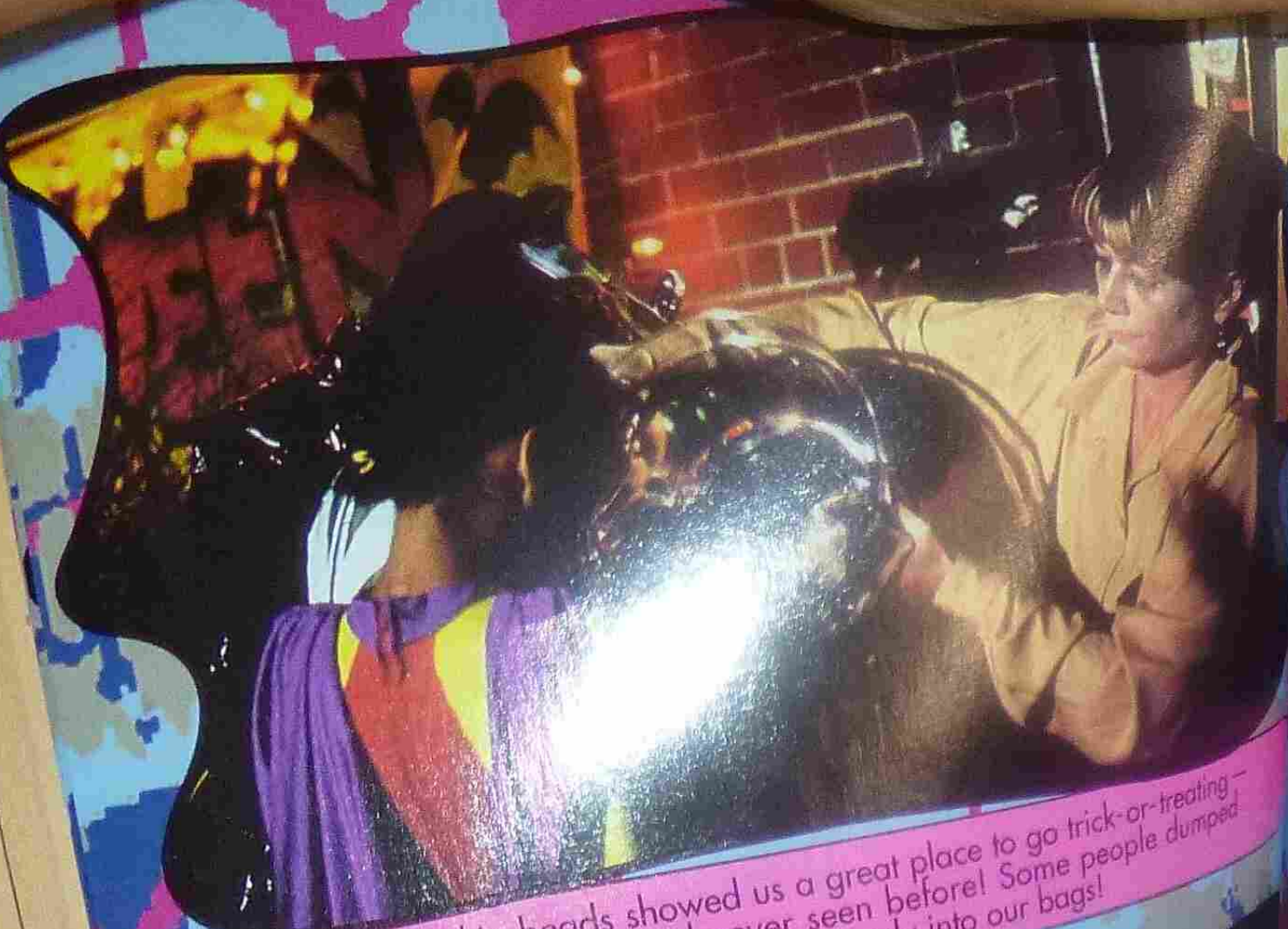


Tabitha and Lee went as space people. It was perfect—because Shane and Shana were going to scare them all the way to the moon!



Tabitha and Lee thought the pumpkin heads were Shane and Shana—so they weren't afraid of them. But I wasn't sure.

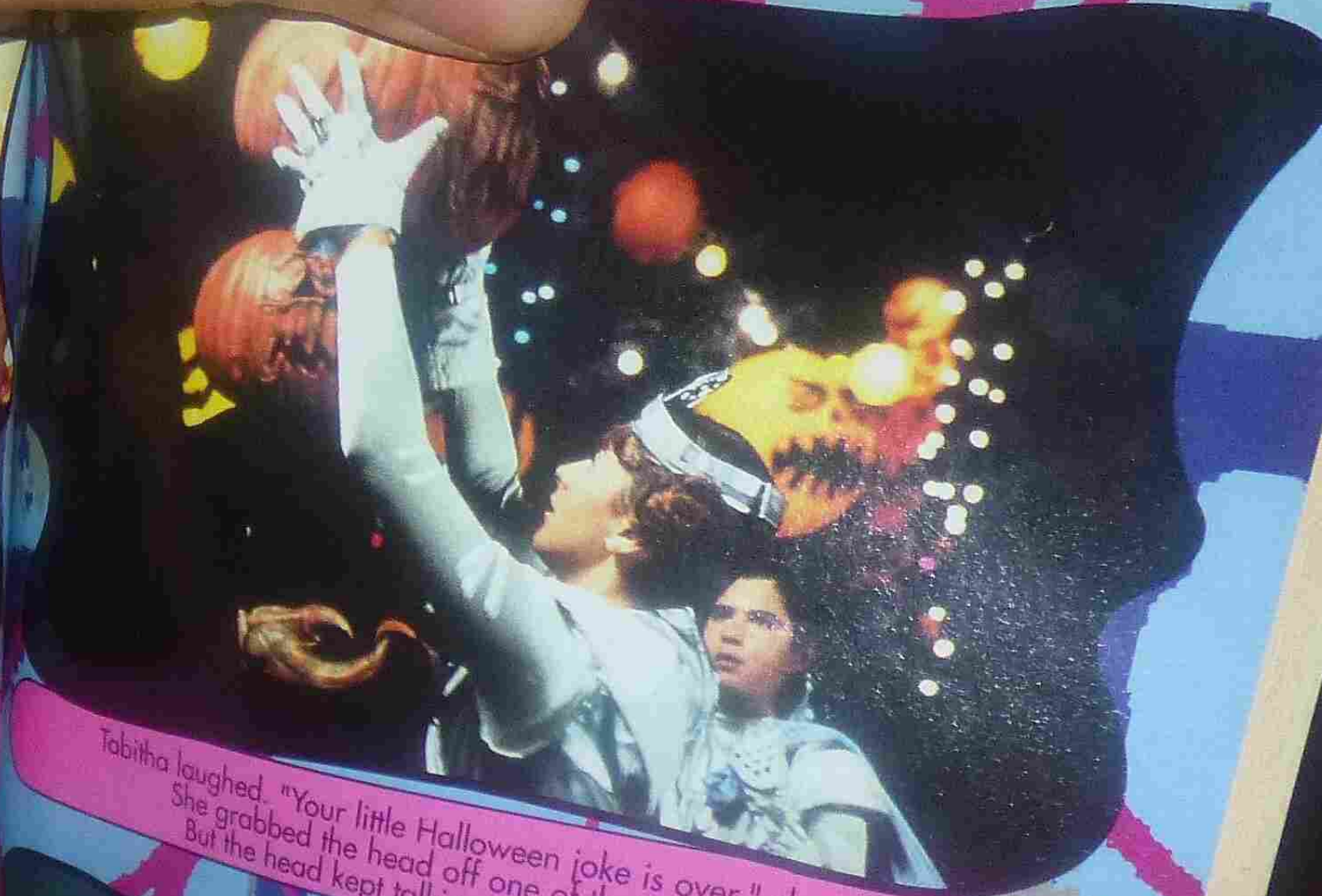




The pumpkin heads showed us a great place to go trick-or-treating — in a neighborhood I'd never seen before! Some people dumped whole buckets of candy into our bags!



Soon our bags were too heavy to carry, and Tabitha and Lee said they were going home. But the pumpkin heads stood in their way. "More flowers!" they chanted. "Trick-or-treat forever!"

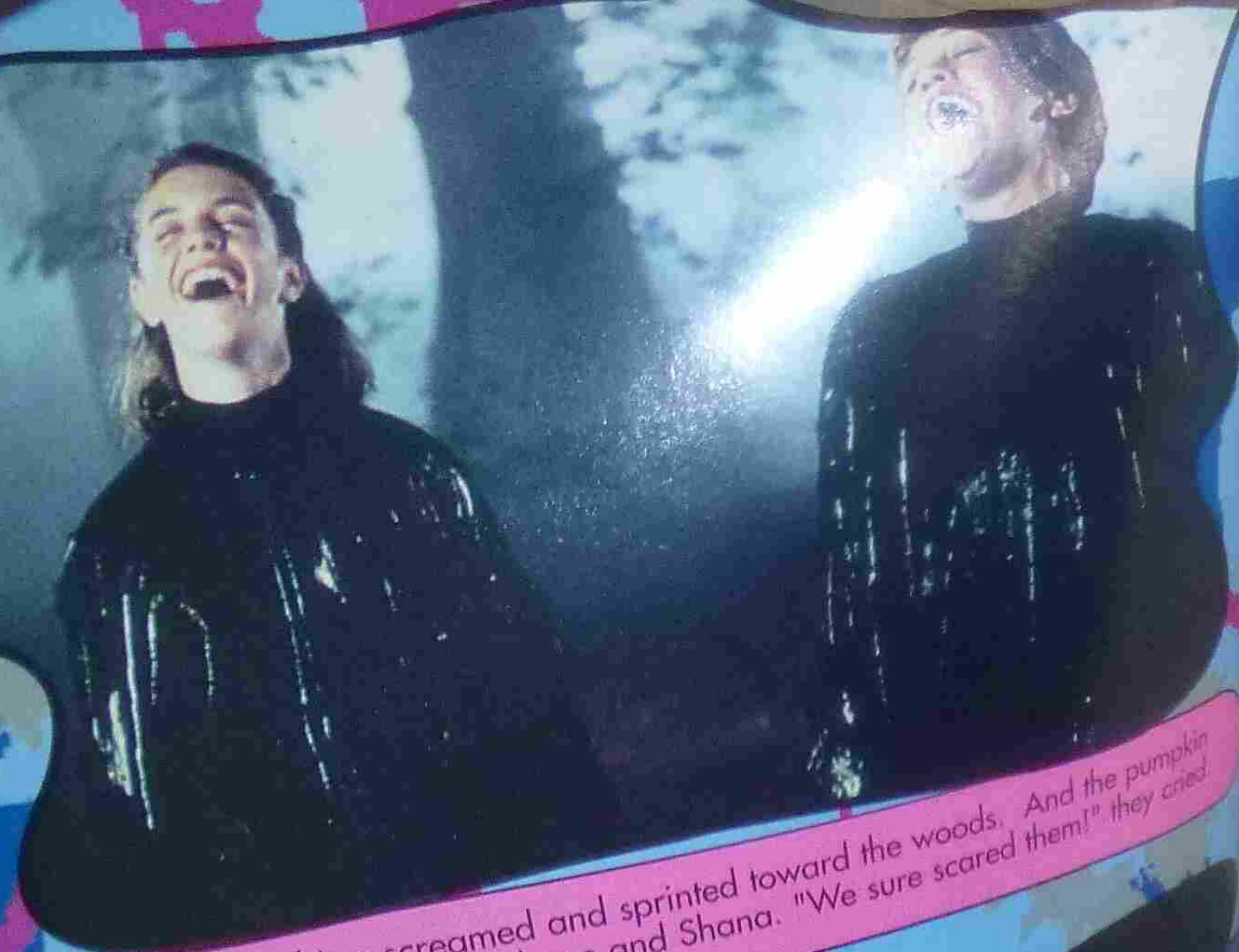


Tabitha laughed. "Your little Halloween joke is over," she said. She grabbed the head off one of the creatures. But the head kept talking — by itself! Whoa!

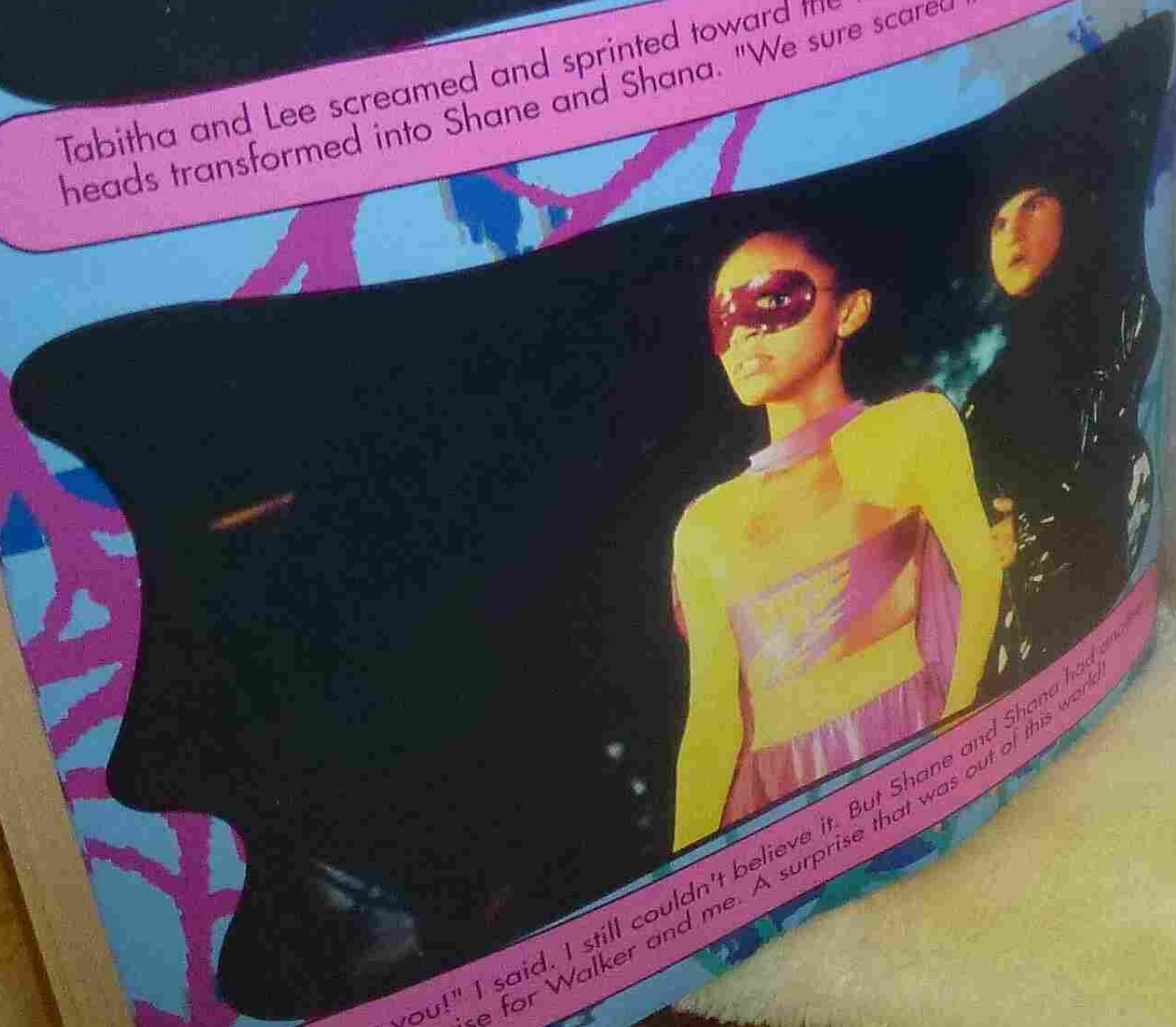


The creatures became angry. Their heads filled with flames as they moved toward Tabitha and Lee.





Tabitha and Lee screamed and sprinted toward the woods. And the pumpkin heads transformed into Shane and Shana. "We sure scared them!" they cried.



"It was you!" I said. I still couldn't believe it. But Shane and Shana had another surprise for Walker and me. A surprise that was out of this world!

friends?" he asked. "Where are Shane and Shana?"

"I don't know," I replied. I looked around, too. No sign of the twins.

"I thought they promised to help us scare Tabitha and Lee," Walker said.

"They did. They'd better show up." I gazed around again. The twins were still nowhere in sight.

It's just like in my dream, I thought. Shane and Shana never showed up to trick-or-treat with us!

But this isn't a dream, I reminded myself. Shane and Shana will be here.

I glanced at Tabitha and Lee. Tabitha held a piece of newspaper in front of her. The two of them were reading it. And they were giggling.

They must be up to something, I thought. But what?

"Hey!" I called to them. She studied my costume. "Well, if it isn't Mighty Mouse," she teased me.



"She's Super Drew," Walker corrected her.  
"Super *Drag* is more like it," Lee put in. He held up his trick-or-treat bag. "Are you two ready to go get some candy?"

I glanced at Walker. What do we do now? I wondered. Where are Shane and Shana?

"Um, why don't we wait a few minutes?" I suggested.

Tabitha raised her eyebrows. She frowned. "What for?" she asked.

"Um . . . well . . .," I stammered. They didn't know Shane and Shana were coming, and I didn't want to tell them. It might ruin the twins' trick. "What's the rush?" I asked. "There's plenty of time."

Lee glanced at Tabitha, then back at me. "Hey. Did you hear about all the people who disappeared?" he asked.

"Yeah!" Tabitha cried. She held out the piece of paper they had been reading. "Look at this."

I took the paper and stared down at it.  
FOUR PEOPLE STILL MISSING, the headline

read. NO CLUES FOUND TO STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES.

"One minute they're here," Tabitha whispered. "And the next minute — vanished!"

"Without a trace," Lee added.

Walker shivered. So did I. I knew Tabitha and Lee were just trying to spook us. But I couldn't help thinking about Shane and Shana.

What if the same horrible thing had happened to them?

Tabitha stepped close to me. "Maybe whatever's getting those people is watching us right now," she whispered.

"Maybe we're next," Lee added in a deep, scary voice.

Walker shivered again. He glanced around. "I hope nothing terrible happened to —" he began to whisper to me.

"To who?" Tabitha asked quickly. "Are you expecting someone?"

"Uh, no," I lied.

Shane and Shana are probably waiting



down the street for us, I told myself. Waiting to jump out of the darkness and scare Tabitha and Lee. "I guess we should get going."

"Yeah. Let's go," Lee agreed.

Tabitha crumpled up the newspaper article and dropped it on the ground. I started to pick it up, but a gust of wind blew it toward the woods.

I glanced into the dark, rustling trees. Was someone — or something — hiding in there? Watching? Waiting?

With a shudder, I left the newspaper where it was. I ran to catch up with the others.

But I still felt nervous. Where were the twins? We hurried from house to house, getting candy. I began to feel more and more nervous.

Strange rustling noises followed us. But whenever I glanced over my shoulder, no one was there.

It's Halloween, I kept telling myself. It's *supposed* to be scary.

While Tabitha and Lee waited for their

candy at one of the houses, I pulled Walker aside. "Shane and Shana are never late," I whispered to him. "I had a terrible dream about them last night. And it started out just like this!"

Walker looked nervous. "Maybe something bad *did* happen to them," he whispered back. "Maybe they disappeared!"

A branch snapped behind us. I whirled around. But all I saw were shadows. Nothing there.

"What if my dream comes true?" I murmured. "What if Shane and Shana are really in trouble?"

"Don't say that, Drew!" Walker cried. "It freaks me out."

"Man, oh man!" Lee shouted. He and Tabitha ran down the porch steps, waving their bags. "We're going to be in candy heaven!"

"Let's see what we've got!" Tabitha cried.

The four of us opened our bags and peered inside. As I checked out all the candy bars, I heard a noise behind us.



A snapping, crackling noise. As if somebody — somebody *big* — was walking over branches and twigs.

The noise grew louder. And closer. I glanced up from my bag. And screamed.

Two horrible creatures rushed toward us across the dark yard. They were at least seven feet tall, with flowing black robes and orange pumpkin heads.

Giant pumpkin heads, carved with evil grins.

Their jagged eyes glowed like burning coals.

Wild snarls came from their twisted mouths. The giant pumpkin creatures moved closer. They loomed over me. Then they raised their hands.

Horrible, monstrous hands.

Each hand had one long claw.

No other fingers. Just one long, sharp claw.

Pointing right at my face.

"Ahhh!" I screamed.

## 7

The pumpkin creatures moved closer.

"Aaahh!" I shrieked. I staggered back and bumped into Walker.

But then I heard Lee. He was laughing!

"Nice try, Drew," he declared. "But you're going to have to do better than that."

"Not bad costumes, though," Tabitha put in. "I'll admit that much. Is it Shane and Shana?"

"I — I don't know," I said. My heart was still beating fast. *Is it the twins?* I wondered. The pumpkin creatures seemed so tall. Of course, they could be wearing high-heeled shoes or something. I wasn't sure.



Lee laughed again. "Oh, scary pumpkin heads, speak to us!" he cried.

The first pumpkin creature raised a claw. "If you really want to trick-or-treat, follow us," it whispered in a scratchy voice. "We know a new neighborhood."

A chill ran down my spine. The voice sounded like nails on a chalkboard.

"A new neighborhood," the second pumpkin repeated. It had the same screechy voice.

"A better place," the first creature added.

"A better place. A better place," the second creature echoed.

Tabitha poked me in the side. "Your friends are too funny."

"I'm telling you — it's not Shane and Shana!" I insisted. At least, I didn't think it was. The creepy voices didn't sound like my old friends.

I studied the pumpkin creatures. If they were the twins, wouldn't they give me a hint?

The two creatures glared at me. I shuddered again. "I don't think these things are human," I whispered.

"Of course not," Lee joked. "They're *your* friends."

Tabitha laughed. "Hey, this is kind of fun," she told the creatures. "We'll go with you. Come on, show us this 'better place.'"

The first pumpkin creature pointed a claw. "Through the woods," it said.

Tabitha and Lee both laughed and marched toward the woods.

I glanced up at one of the pumpkin creatures. "Shane?" I whispered.

"Through the woods," the creature ordered in its scratchy voice. "Move!"

"I think we'd better listen to it, Drew," Walker murmured.

We hurried into the woods behind Tabitha and Lee. One creature led the way. The second followed behind Walker and me.

"A better place," the creatures chanted as we marched. "A better place."

Where are they taking us? I wondered.

"A better place," the creatures chanted. "A better place."



"I wish they'd stop doing that," Walker complained.

"I think it's funny," Tabitha told him. "Hey, Lee. Which one do you think is Shane and which one is Shana?"

"I don't know," he replied. "It's hard to tell a girl pumpkin from a guy pumpkin!"

"Don't talk," the first creature ordered.

"Keep moving," the second one croaked.

As we marched deeper into the forest, I turned back to the second creature. "Shane . . . Shana?" I whispered. "Is it you?"

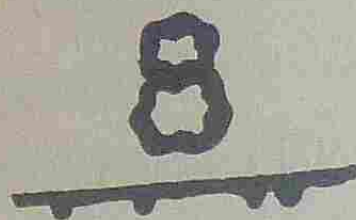
The pumpkin creature laid a claw on my shoulder. Its glowing eyes seemed to stare right through me. "A better place. A better place," it chanted. "Move!"

The creature gave me a little push. I stumbled forward.

Whoa! I thought. The twins wouldn't do this to me. These creatures definitely aren't my old friends.

But if they weren't Shane and Shana, who were they?

And where were they taking us?



Finally, we reached the other side of the woods. The first pumpkin creature lifted its claw and pointed.

Slowly, I raised my eyes.

Ahead of us stood a neighborhood I had never seen before. Big, fancy houses lined the streets. Bright lights shone from the porches. Halloween decorations covered the yards and windows. Jack-o'-lanterns sat along the sidewalks.

Everything looked bigger and better than in our own neighborhood.

It's like another world, I thought.

"Wow!" Walker cried. "Where are we?"

"Good question," I told him.



"Who cares where we are?" Tabitha said.  
"It's definitely a better place!"  
"Look at all the houses," Lee put in. "Hundreds of them!"

"Let's go!" Tabitha yelled.  
Lee, Tabitha, and Walker ran toward the houses. But I didn't move. Something isn't right, I thought.

I stared at the pumpkin creatures. If this was Shane and Shana, now was their chance to tell me.

But the creatures just stared back at me with glowing eyes.

"Trick-or-treat," one of them croaked.  
"Trick-or-treat!"

I gulped and ran to catch up with the others.

At every house, people smiled and gave us tons of candy. They stuffed giant candy bars into our bags. They tossed us huge peppermint sticks. One man used a bucket to pour out lollipops the size of baseballs!

"This is such a great neighborhood!" Tabitha exclaimed as we hurried down the

sidewalk. "How did Shane and Shana ever find it?"

"Yeah! I wonder why we've never heard of it," Lee added.

I glanced back at the pumpkin creatures. They followed us everywhere. "It's a great place, all right," I agreed. "But . . ." I stopped talking and shook my head.

"But what?" Walker asked.

"I don't think those creatures are Shane and Shana," I whispered nervously.

Tabitha rolled her eyes. "Yeah, right."

"Look at all this candy!" Lee cried, holding his bag up. "It's going to take a year to eat all this stuff."

While the others looked through their bags, I glanced at the pumpkin creatures again. Where were Shane and Shana?

Why didn't they meet up with us?

"Tabitha? What time is it?" I asked.

Tabitha checked her watch. "It's getting late," she announced. "We should get back. Come on, guys."



She turned toward the woods. A pumpkin creature stepped in front of her. "More houses," it croaked.

"What?" Tabitha asked in surprise.

"Lots more houses," the second pumpkin creature insisted.

"What are you talking about?" Tabitha asked. "Our bags are full. We're leaving."

"Trick-or-treat!" the pumpkin creatures screeched.

Tabitha narrowed her eyes. She stepped around the first pumpkin creature.

It jumped in front of her.

She tried to go around the other side. The pumpkin creature blocked her way again.

Then Lee tried to move toward the woods. The second creature blocked his path.

"What's your problem?" Lee demanded.

"We have to leave."

"Get out of the way!" Tabitha ordered.

The first creature shook its head. "You cannot leave."

"What do you mean, we can't leave?" I asked.

"More houses," the second creature cried. "Trick-or-treat!"

"We've been out here all night," Lee complained. "How long do you expect us to trick-or-treat?"

"How long?" The first creature's mouth twisted into an evil grin. "Forever!"

"Trick-or-treat forever!" the other creature yelled.

"Listen, Shane and Shana!" Tabitha snapped. "I know you two like this little game. But you're not scaring us."

"Yeah, take off those stupid pumpkin heads," Lee demanded. "They look fake, anyway."

"More houses!" the first creature ordered.

"Your Halloween joke is over," Tabitha insisted. She reached up, grabbed the creature's head, and yanked it off.

I stared in terror.

Underneath the pumpkin head was —



nothing! No human head. No face. Just an empty space on top of the creature's shoulders.

Tabitha stared in horror at the head in her hands.

The jagged mouth opened.

"I said more houses!" it cried.



"AAAAHHH!" Tabitha shrieked. She dropped the pumpkin head.

It rolled across the grass and stopped at Lee's feet. "Lots more houses!" it screeched up at him.

Lee's mouth dropped open. His eyes were huge and terrified.

"Trick-or-treat forever," the second pumpkin creature chanted.

"You will obey!" the first creature's head cried.

Then its headless body turned. It pointed its long sharp claw at a row of jack-o'-lanterns on the sidewalk.

A bright green beam shot out of the



claw. It blasted the jack-o'-lanterns to pieces.

Gobs of pumpkin flew through the air. Slimy orange pulp splattered all over the sidewalk.

Walker grabbed my arm and held on tight. "Who are you?" Tabitha whispered.

"What do you want?" Lee cried, backing away.

"I want you to trick-or-treat forever," the pumpkin head cried. "Now go!"

"We'd better do what they say," Walker told me nervously. "I don't want to explode like those jack-o'-lanterns!"

I just nodded. I was too scared to speak.

We snatched up our bags and ran back toward the houses.

I glanced over my shoulder.

The first pumpkin creature picked up its head and put it back on its body. Then it glared at me.

"Trick-or-treat forever!" it yelled.

\* \* \*

We kept trick-or-treating until our bags were so full, we could barely carry them. But the pumpkin creatures wouldn't let us stop.

"Please, I'm tired," Tabitha begged.

"My feet hurt," Lee whimpered. He slumped down on the curb.

"No time to rest," the creatures barked.

"More houses."

"We can't," I panted. "We're too tired."

"Our bags are full," Tabitha complained. "We can't carry any more candy. Please, let us go home."

The first creature grabbed Tabitha's bag and turned it upside down. All the candy spilled out onto the street. "Now it's empty. Go," it ordered. "More houses. Lots more."

"Trick-or-treat forever. Forever," the second creature chanted.

Tabitha stared into the creature's pumpkin face. "You took the others, didn't you?" she whispered. "You know about those four missing people."



The pumpkin creatures didn't answer. But bright orange flames shot out of their heads.

Tabitha screamed. "Run!" she yelled. She took off down the street. Lee sped after her. Walker and I glanced at each other. Then we began to run, too.

Tabitha and Lee sprinted into the woods. They hurried through the trees. Walker and I followed them as fast as we could. But it was hard to run in the woods — there were branches and slippery dead leaves on the ground.

I heard a shriek. Tabitha had fallen!

Lee and Walker helped her up. But it was too late. The pumpkin creatures were right behind us. One of them walked straight up to Tabitha.

It towered over her.

Tabitha was cornered! She pressed her back against a tree.

"What are you going to do with us?" she asked.

The creature stared at her with glowing

eyes. "It's too bad you tried to run," it whispered in its scratchy voice.

"You seemed like such a nice girl," the second creature said. "Too bad that has to change."

The creatures sucked in their breath. Then both of them screeched in fury.

Their pumpkin faces twisted.

Bright orange flames shot from their eyes. Slowly, they moved toward Tabitha and Lee. "How dare you not obey us!" the first creature shouted.

"How dare you not listen!" the second one yelled.

Tabitha and Lee backed away. But the creatures went after them. They reached up and pulled off their own pumpkin heads.

"Put on the head," the second creature demanded, holding its head out to Lee. "You will be one of us."

"Put on the head," the first one repeated. It raised its pumpkin head above Tabitha.

"Please! No!" Tabitha begged. "Please. Let us go. Just let us go!"



I watched in horror as the creature began to lower its pumpkin head over Tabitha. The pumpkin head dropped lower and lower.

Tabitha screamed. She ducked under the pumpkin head. She ran between the two creatures.

The creatures shrieked in fury. They reached out with their claws. But Tabitha and Lee scurried past them. They charged through the trees.

"Run! Run!" the first pumpkin head shouted after them. "We will find you. You can't escape."

"We know where you live," the second pumpkin head called. "You will become one of us!"

I grabbed Walker's hand. "Let's get out of here," I cried. But before we could move, the creatures stepped in front of us and blocked our way.

They raised their giant orange heads in the air.

No! I thought. They're going to put the

heads on Walker and me! Turn *us* into hideous pumpkin creatures, too!

But, instead, the creatures stuck the heads back onto their own shoulders.

Their eyes came alive again. Glowing. Glaring at us.

Walker and I gazed at each other in terror. The creatures kept staring at us. Their eyes gleamed. Their mouths twisted.

With evil grins, they moved closer.

Closer.

And they began to laugh!



"Did you see the looks on their faces?" the first creature cried.

The second one nodded. "We scared them good!"

The creatures laughed harder and harder.

Their huge heads began to spin around and around.

Their claws flew from their hands.

Their black robes swirled around their tall bodies.

Walker and I stared at them, totally shocked.

The creatures had completely transformed — into Shane and Shana!

"It was you!" I cried.

"Huh?" Walker glanced in surprise at the twins. "How did you do that?"

But Shane and Shana couldn't speak — they were laughing too hard.

"I mean, at first I wondered if it was you," I told them. "But then I was sure it wasn't! Oh, man! Those costumes were great! And you were so mean and scary! You really fooled me!"

"But — but — but *how*?" Walker stut-tered. "The way you just changed. And the way that laser beam shot out of your claw. And this neighborhood!"

Shana finally caught her breath. "What neighborhood?" she asked.

Walker glanced around — and gasped.

We were standing at the edge of the woods. But the "new neighborhood" had disappeared.

"Okay, you guys." Walker's voice shook. "How did you do that?"

Shane grinned. "Well, there *are* advantages to being an alien."



"An — an *alien*?" Walker choked out. He glanced at me.

I smiled. "Yeah, Walker. Didn't I tell you? Shane and Shana are aliens."



"Aliens?" Walker whispered.

"Before they moved away, Shane and Shana were my best friends. I told you, remember?" I asked. "They lived next door to me."

"But . . . but . . . aliens?" Walker stammered. "You never told me *that*!"

I rolled my eyes. "Would you have believed me?"

Walker shook his head.

I laughed. So did the twins.

"I hope you didn't scare Tabitha and Lee too much," I said. "Of course, I hope you didn't scare them too *little*, either."

"It was a blast," Shane told me. "You know,



I think we're getting to like Halloween as much as you do."

"It's the one time we get to be someone else," Shana added. She glanced at Shane. "Well, we have to get back."

The twins reached up and pulled off their human faces. Underneath were their real faces. Alien faces. Tiny, shriveled-up heads with long, skinny necks. Antennae poked from their cheeks.

Shana held up a remote control and punched it with a claw. A loud humming noise filled the air. A small silver spaceship appeared, hovering over the trees.

The ship sank to the ground in front of us.

Shana turned to Walker. "Nice meeting you, Walker."

Walker licked his lips. "Uh, you, too," he muttered.

"We'll see you next year, Drew," Shane told me. He and Shana hurried toward the spaceship.

"Thanks again," I called after them, waving.

Walker waved, too. He couldn't take his eyes off the spaceship.

I glanced down at my trick-or-treat bag. "Shane, Shana! Wait!" I yelled.

The twins stopped and turned back to me. "Do you guys want some candy for the trip?" I asked.

"No, thanks," Shana told me. "It's not part of our diet."

Shane grinned. "But if you know where some nice plump adults are, we'd eat those."

"You mean..." I gulped. "You eat *humans*?"

Shana nodded. "But only when we're hungry."

"And we're pretty full," Shane explained. "We just finished a four-course meal earlier tonight."

"A four-course meal?" I repeated.

Shana pointed at something on the ground. A piece of crumpled paper. I picked it up and smoothed it out. It was the newspaper story Tabitha had tossed down earlier.



The story about the four people who had vanished.  
The four adults.

My hands started to shake. I stared at the twins in horror. "The four missing people?" I whispered. "You ate them?"  
Shane grinned.

"Oh, by the way," Shana added. Her voice grew deep and raspy. I wouldn't eat all that candy if I were you. It might fatten you up." She licked her lips and smiled. "And we *will* be back next year — to feed again."

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